

Delta Scene

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**A Bird In The Hand
Ellis Nassour
Blame It On The Blues
The Vineyard
and much more. . .**

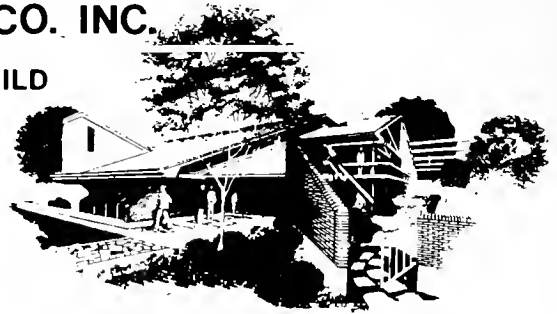
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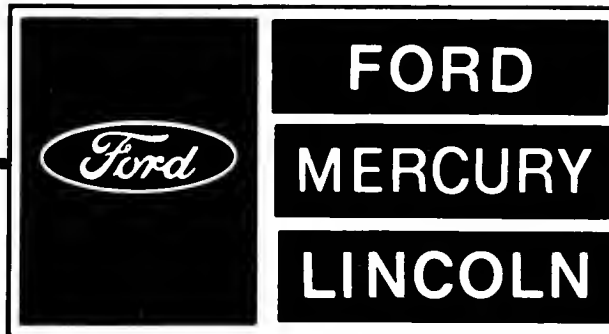
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Delta Scene



page 8



page 12



page 16



page 19



page 22

4 Calendar Of Events

The who, what, when, where, and why of what's happening in the Delta.

8 Vicksburg's Star-Struck Kid's Own Star Is Rising

Elaine Hughes reports on a former Vicksburger, Ellis Nassour, freelance writer and author.

12 Big Woods — What There Is Left

Memories of a time past, probably never to be again, by Andy McWilliams.

14 The Vineyard

An Intriguing story by William Hodges.

16 A Bird In The Hand

Merita Koll shares with us the talents of a Greenwood native.

19 Blame It On The Blues

Glenn York recalls an old man's wanderings.

22 Linden: A Taste Of The Old (And Not So Old)

If you like touring old homes, Yvonne Tomek assures you that you'll love dining at this one.

28 Book Review: The Fabric Of Genius: One Writer's Beginnings

Rebecca Hood-Adams reviews Eudora Welty's autobiography; she led a quiet life — she stayed home and wrote.

Cover Photo: Kelly Carpenter, of Greenwood, MS, captures the spirit and motion of each bird as he works. Kelly is featured in this issue of **Delta Scene**.

AUTUMN EVENTS



SEPTEMBER

September 9-28

SEA-EARTH-SKY, The Art of Walter Anderson, a traveling exhibition. Gallery talk by Mary Anderson, Sunday, September 9 at 3:30 p.m., Wright Art Building, Delta State University, Cleveland, MS.

OCTOBER

October 6

Gateway to the Delta 13th Annual Arts and Crafts Festival, opens 9:00 a.m., exhibits, competition, and handmade items only, Yazoo City, MS.

Duck Calling Contest, Greenville Mall, Greenville, MS.

Home In The Woods, Itta Bena, MS. arts and crafts, games, food, entertainment. For more information call 254-6318.

Yellow Dog Festival, Indianola, MS, 887-4454.

Fallfest, Drew, MS, 745-8975.

October 11

Cooking School presented by the Commonwealth, Ann Rushing featured cook, 7:00-9:00 p.m., for more information call 453-5312.

October 13

Cleveland October Festival, arts and crafts, green strip downtown, Cleveland, MS.

October 15, 16, 17

Greenville Garden Club Arts and Antique Festival - Washington County Convention Center, Greenville, MS.

October 19 and 20

Arts and Craft Show, Greenville

Mall, Greenville, MS.

October 21

The Greenville Symphony Brass Quintet will perform in the First Greenville Bank. 4 p.m., 335-4456.

Carson and Barnes Circus, five ring circus, sponsored by the Greenwood Chamber of Commerce. Greenwood, MS, for more information call 453-4152.

Men's show, art mixed media, works by George Wade, Jack Johnson, Granville Martin, and Hubert Armstrong, Cottonlandia, Greenwood, MS.

October 23

Lions Club Circus, 4:30 p.m. and 8:00 p.m., Bolivar County Expo Building, Cleveland, MS.

October 30

Toccatas and Flourishes Community Concert, Clarksdale, MS, for more information call 627-7337.

October 31, Nov. 1 and 2

Mistletoe Marketplace, Mississippi Trademart, The Mississippi Fairgrounds, Jackson, MS.

NOVEMBER

November 2, 4, 9, 10

"Picnic" - Delta Center Stage, Greenville Airport Grounds, Greenville, MS. For more information call 378-3141.

November 3

Delta State Marching Band Festival, DSU Football Field, 7 a.m. - 11 p.m. Delta State University, Cleveland, MS.

November 4-30

Art Vivo! Living Traditions in Mexican Folk Art, traveling exhibition, Wright Art Building, Delta State University, Cleveland, MS.

November 10

Veterans Day Parade, 11:00 a.m., Downtown, Greenville, MS.

Annual Pancake Breakfast sponsored by Kiwanis Club, Davis School Auditorium, all day. For more information call 453-4152, Greenwood, MS.

300 Oaks Run Race sponsored by

Greenwood Chamber of Commerce. For more information call 453-4152, Greenwood, MS.

November 11 & 12

Renaissance Fall Campus Concert, 8 p.m., Broom Auditorium, Delta State University, Cleveland, MS.

November 14

Ambassador Arkady Shevchenko, 7:30 p.m., Broom Auditorium, Delta State University, Cleveland, MS.

November 17

Santa Claus arrives, photos with Santa begin, 23rd, 24th, and 26th, Greenville Mall, Greenville, MS.

November 18

Textile Art by Pat Brown, reception at 2:00 p.m., Cottonlandia, Greenwood, MS.

November 19

Wind Ensemble Concert, Dr. Bill Clark, conductor, Broom Hall, 8:00 p.m., Delta State University, Cleveland, MS.

November 30

Band Festival Day sponsored by Jaycees, for more information call George Smith, 453-2246, Greenwood, MS.

DECEMBER

December 1

Third Annual Christmas Parade, 10:00 a.m., Indianola, MS.

Christmas Parade, Downtown, Greenville, MS.

Arts and Craft Show, Greenwood Leflore Civic Center, for more information call 453-4065.

December 1 & 2

Christmas at Floewood River Plantation, seasonal decorations throughout the plantation, highlighting the weekend will be the Candlelight Tour on Saturday evening. Floewood River Plantation, Greenwood, MS.

December 3-6, 10-13, 17-20

Choirs in Mall, Greenville Mall, Greenville, MS.

December 3

Peter and the Wolf performed by noted puppeteer Peter Zapleta, Greenville Symphony conducted by

Sidney McKay. 1 p.m. and 7 p.m., 335-4456.

December 4

The Leland Chamber of Commerce invites you to Christmas on Deer Creek, Tuesday, December 4, 1984. Some 15 floats will be placed in Deer Creek depicting the Christmas Story. At 6:00 p.m. all the floats will be lighted and a musical program will be presented. The highlight of the evening will be the arrival of Santa himself in his reindeer drawn sleigh.

December 4

Guest Artist - Mauney Duo, violin and piano, Zeigel Auditorium, 8:00 p.m., Delta State University, Cleveland, MS.

December 6

Roberta Peters, Broom Auditorium, Delta State University, 7:30 p.m., Cleveland, MS.

December 16

Paint by Gaspare Ruffolo, reception at 2:00 p.m., Cottonlandia, Greenwood, MS.

CONTINUING EVENTS

Wister Gardens - A beautiful estate one mile north of Belzoni is open for your enjoyment, year round. Belzoni, MS.

Ethel Mohamed's Stitchery, 307 Central, Belzoni, MS. Call for appointment, 247-1433. Mrs. Mohamed has gained fame with her heirloom stitchery, and has work in the Smithsonian, Washington, D.C. and recently had reproductions made of one to be sold. Others not for sale.

Floewood River Plantation: A Living History Cotton Plantation recreated, Visitor Center, Gift Shop and Cotton Museum open full year. 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday - Saturday and 1 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Sunday. Located two miles west of Greenwood, MS.

Living History Program: Demonstrations of early 1800s frontier skills and crafts. Demonstrations February - November; inn along the Natchez Trace open five days a week, February - November; daily March - October, grounds open year round. Natchez, MS.

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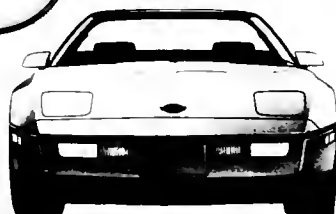
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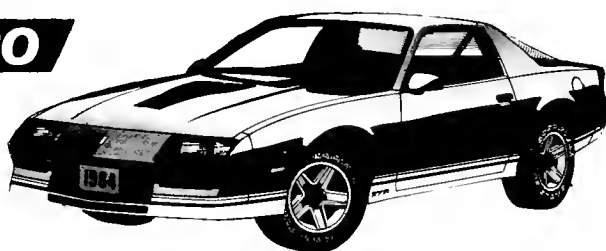


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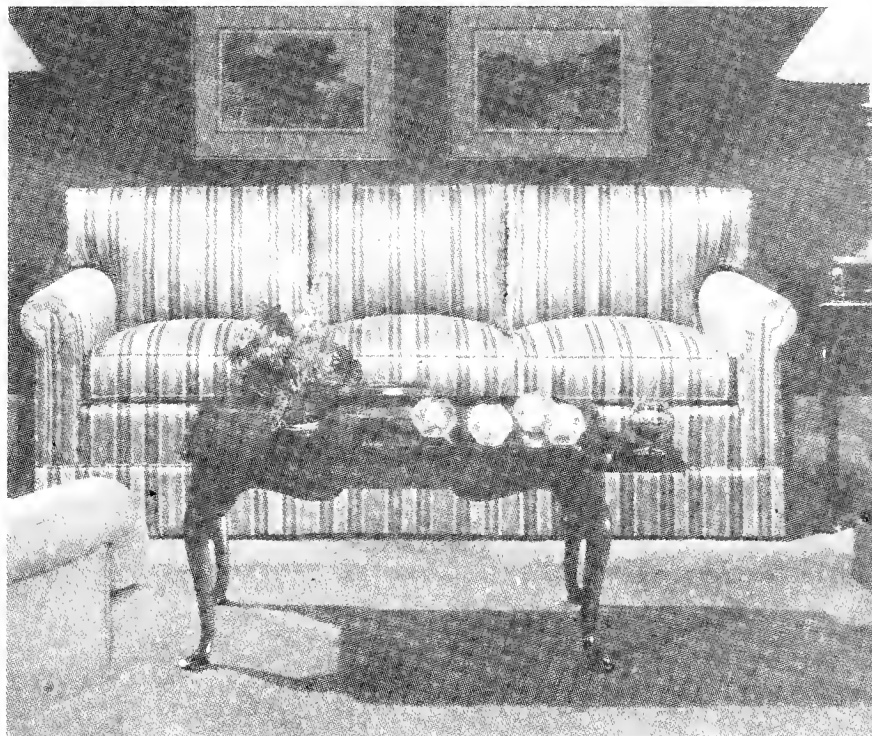
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Vicksburg's Star-Struck Kid's Own Star Is Rising

by Elaine Hughes

Former Vicksburger Ellis Nassour doesn't like those "Look-what-I've-suffered-to-get-where-I-am" stories — he's suffered through enough of them doing the celebrity interviews he specializes in. So he lets you know right off not to expect one from him: "I've never missed a meal, and never really wanted for anything. Very simply, I came from nowhere and I've gotten nowhere. I'm in that strange limbo between being a shining star or a has-been. Do you think that will make a good story?"

Of course, even with a bit more modesty than he usually displays, Ellis is understating his case. The "have-beens" in his life to date — from Ole Miss race riots, reporting for **The New York Times**, touring with The Who, working on the landmark musical "Jesus Christ, Superstar" to his halcyon days now as a freelance writer and author — could fill several anthologies. "I guess you use the word 'several,'" he laughs, "because when you wind me up, I don't shut up! It might be fun, one day, to do such a book — aptly titled **Ellis In Wonderland**, but I'd have to change all the names to protect the guilty!"

Ellis sees nothing unusual about growing up in Mississippi and deciding at age ten that he wanted to be a writer for the **Times** and write and direct DeMille-style epics. But being raised in a small town such as Vicksburg, in a close-knit Lebanese community, wasn't **exactly the ideal start.**

"It was considered weird for

someone to go to the movies four times a week, work after school, and not play football. To want to be a writer instead of a doctor or lawyer made it that much worse!"

In strange ways and from unlikely sources, he found support — from Gladys Perkins Buckner, now of Port Gibson, a theater manager (for whom he eventually worked); the coach at St. Aloysius High School, Joe Balzi, "who tried to drive me nuts to get me to play ball but respected my decision not to"; and city alderman, O.J. Bori, "who told me stories of places neither one of us had been."

Ellis said that his life was a series of lucky accidents, "of being in the right place at the **wrong** time and having an incessant curiosity to ask questions. Where you're born — the local color you absorb and the characters you meet — prepares you for what is to come. In my case, my father was a butcher (and grocer) and even he agreed there was nothing to keep me at home. The world outside of Vicksburg fascinated me. In 1959 there was that inevitable trip to New York, and right away out of school I began working summers on the Gulf Coast as a resort hotel waiter and assistant bookkeeper for an automobile dealership. When I made the announcement, after college, that I was moving to New York to take my place on **The New York Times**, there was no shock or gnashing of teeth from my mom and dad. They simply said, 'Don't forget our phone number and that you're always

welcome to come back home.' Considering I **knew** what lay ahead, that was comforting advice."

"Today's" Ellis Nassour began to emerge at the University of Mississippi. "Very quickly I went from introvert to extravert. I got to Ole Miss early to look for a job, when there was no guarantee I could get a Federal loan. Rush was in progress, and I didn't even know what a fraternity was. I went to a small Catholic school and had no lineage, so no one was rushing me.

"My family could not afford to send me to Ole Miss, so I lived on my savings — a budget of \$1.52 a day for food, entirely possible then. One week when I bought a couple of Cokes in the grill for two Chi Omegas — entirely out of my league — and my allowance escalated to \$1.67!, I wrote home, "I don't think I'm spending too much on food, do you?"

"I finally got a job working in the cafeteria, and whether making hot cakes at breakfast or dipping ice cream (Kappa Deltas had the biggest, non-phony smiles and got the biggest scoops) I had access to everyone. Thanks to Doug Abraham of Greenville and Dick Wilson of Jackson (student body presidents), who encouraged me 'to get involved,' I began a gradual take over of anything social on campus, from movies and dances to concerts."

Ellis made the most of "majoring in student activities and minoring in journalism." His now-famous acerbic wit evolved in interviews for

The Daily Mississippian with visiting superstars, such as Bob Hope, and a later column, "Speaking of Ole Miss," in which he sarcastically skewered traditional values.

"Fraternities considered me a powerful independent — the ice cream scoop can be a mighty tool — and wooed me for choice seats to concerts and help during the various elections, but the joke was on them. I was just a poor slob, admiring their Corvettes and blazers, and working for a living."

During his two (unprecedented) years as director of social affairs for the Associated Student Body, Ellis brought top entertainers not only to Ole Miss but to various colleges in the South. The landmark concert came at the height of the campus violence at the enrollment of James Meredith in 1962 when Mary of Peter, Paul & Mary insisted that Meredith be present at the performance. "Even the Federal marshalls thought, under the insane chain of events, that would be a very unwise move, so to appease her — and to avoid being lynched myself at the prospect of no show — I took Mary to his room for a private performance."

Then there was the time Ellis had to arrange for a case of beer in a dry

county so a very famous performer could go on — he couldn't do the show stone sober. And the occasion he had to actually hold a famous songstress up as she "sang" to keep her from falling off the stage. "We'd ply her with five or six cups of strong black coffee, and when our backs were turned she'd ply herself with vodka from a fifth. I kept wondering, 'Why isn't this woman getting sober?'"

Ironically, it was James Meredith who brought Ellis some national attention. He was the first employee in the cafeteria to serve the controversial student. "James came in, preceded by marshalls and followed by TV cameras, stepped up to the entree section of my line and ordered fried chicken. Without even giving it a thought, I said what we always said: 'White meat or dark?' His famous answer: 'White.' That exchange made the network news the following evening, and I returned to my room to find it ransacked."

A thought-provoking, highly-reasoned piece on the Meredith crisis in the **Vicksburg Evening Post** brought Ellis to the attention of **New York Times** reporters on campus, whom he later assisted.

"I think I might have earned \$25 all total, but they kept telling me, 'If

you ever get to New York, look us up.' At that point, I think that TV exposure sort of changed my direction and I wanted to go to WLBT in Jackson for some on camera experience." Then came a course in creative writing and the tiny but dynamic Mildred Topp, a novelist who gave the course. "I was turning my Vicksburg screenplays and experiences into short stories, and kept waiting for her accolades. They didn't come the way I expected. She told me, 'You're not the best damn writer in this class, but you're the only one who's going to do anything commercial with your work.' She was a terror in the classroom but fiercely loyal and helpful."

After Ole Miss, and his move to New York, Ellis enrolled at Columbia University and soon landed his "dream" job at the **Times** — a dream that quickly soured. Through his reporter contacts at the paper, he discovered that managing editor Turner Catledge was from Philadelphia, Mississippi. One day Ellis brashly went to his office and announced himself. Southern gentleman that he was, Catledge took him to lunch. "After dessert, he made the mistake of politely asking, 'How would you like a job here?' And I started the next day."



Ellis Nassour interviews Ms. Piggy.

Photo by Everette Short



Ellis Nassour

Photo by Everett Short

He stayed six years, working on assignments that ranged from taxi strikes, the police beat, even a James Meredith press conference to the United Nations, Hollywood, and cultural news.

"**The Times** was my real education and it gave me the opportunity to travel around the world. But you don't realize it's **not** a great newspaper until you work there. My dad called it a Communist rag, which was not true (liberal, yes; Communist, no), and was forever embarrassed to tell his friends I worked there. **The Times** was grossly unfair to me. I'd cover stories and they'd print them verbatim — under the department head's by-line; I'd do leg work, then they'd give my notes and the assignment to a particular pet. They had such high double standards. I made waves with the union, and they didn't appreciate that.

"By the time I got what I wanted, writing about theater and television, it was too late for me. I saw great writers of yesteryear — Pulitzer Prize winners — reduced to doing phone rewrites, and watched as they drank themselves out to pasture. They kept telling me, 'Get out while you can.'"

He did. The next stop was MCA (Music Corporation of America/Universal Pictures) for a year and a half where he was East Coast director of artist relations. Some exciting projects came his way: Music coordinator for soundtracks, introducing Elton John to the American public; and working with The Who (a gigantic nightmare!) on their historic presentation of "Tommy" at the Metropolitan Opera House (a first). But it was "Jesus Christ, Superstar" that turned out to be his lucky break.

"I was in a London restaurant and

saw two young guys writing fiercely on napkins. I said, 'What are you doing?' They told me they were writing a rock musical about Jesus. I almost choked. Being from Mississippi I knew Jesus was a hot subject, **but** material for a rock musical? I told them to look me up if they ever came to New York."

Six months later Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber showed up "virtually penniless and in need of a place to stay. I let them sleep on my living room floor, and helped promote an audition single from what they were calling rock opera."

MCA Records eventually released "Jesus Christ, Superstar" as an album. Next came the concert performances, Broadway and overseas productions and finally the movie. Ellis got to participate in the earnings "which was a great blessing because it allowed me financial freedom for the next few years to pursue the kind of writing I wanted to do."

His first book: **Rock Opera: The Creation of Jesus Christ, Superstar**. "They always say, 'Write what you know most about.' But **Rock Opera** was more than that. I used the book to tell how the record business and theater really worked. And even if it didn't turn out to be a best-seller (it is still used in theater classes), it was well-received and opened doors for me."

While at MCA, Ellis also became the resident country expert "by virtue of the fact that I was from Mississippi. Again the joke was on them. I didn't know one iota about country music — but I learned." Along the way he worked with and became friends with Loretta Lynn "and in spite of obstacles put in our way and the distances that have come between us, she is the only 'celebrity' I would call a friend." He suggested to Loretta that they collaborate on a book about her life "because the stories she told me were unbelievable. Eventually she chose another writer, whom I stupidly introduced her to!"

Ellis' freelance writing career has given him star encounters with Bobby Darin, Bette Davis, Mae West, Joan Crawford, John Denver, Jerry Lewis, Fred Astaire, Ginger Rogers, Olivia Newton-John, the Bee Gees and Miss Piggy (the hardest interview he ever attempted).

What's it like interviewing celebrities? "Well," he admits, "for a star-struck kid from Mississippi, quite fulfilling. But, look, these people are just as boring and interesting as anybody else — they're just known by millions." Then what keeps him at it? "Being nosey helps! You have to be curious about people or you wouldn't be doing it in the first place. There is a challenge, also. To get something from one of them they haven't said before. You have to do your homework by reading everything you can get your hands on. I tend to dig, even when they seem to resist, and ask questions I personally would like answered. More than once I've gotten an answer to a touchy question because I persisted.

This approach pin-pointed Mae West's elusive birth date. "She kept hedging but I wouldn't let go. Finally she said she was born around the time the span of the Brooklyn Bridge was laid. I asked, 'Which span?' There were two, months apart. She admitted it was the first span, and I was able to trace exactly when she was born — 1884."

And sometimes there are downright bad interviews because many celebrities are determined to talk about what they want to talk about, "which isn't easy when I set my mind to it." Ellis ranks Carol Channing as his worst interview — "it was as if she had been programmed before I got into the room, and I don't even think she stopped for a breath or knew I was there." And with Miss Piggy "all she did was rant on about some little green fella who was supposed to be giving her an engagement ring from Tiffany's. He never showed." Then there was Mickey Rooney.

"The way he was rambling, I honestly thought he was talking to himself. I interrupted, 'Mr. Rooney, wait a minute! You're not answering my questions.' He yelled at me, 'Who's doing this interview?' And I told him, 'I'm doing the interview and I'm interviewing you.'" That snapped him out of it and he replied, 'Oh, go right ahead.' It turned out to be one of my best."

A brief moment with Nikita Khrushchev during his *Times* period gave Ellis his favorite anecdote. "I

was covering a trade-show in Russia and Premier Khrushchev was there, milking the press, as usual. He came up to me and said, looking me over, 'Hummmmm, you American?' and I looked him over right back and said, 'Da (yes). . . You Russian?' He stared at me a second, quite puzzled, then threw his head back and laughed."

With celebrities, the grass is always greener on the other side. Ellis explained that most lead insulated and, very often, lonely lives. "Once I spent a day with Elvis Presley and his entourage in Boston. He was fidgety and seemed to be a parody of himself. The main thing I came away with was, 'God, this man is **never** alone.' He seemed never to have a private moment, even when he went to the bathroom."

One indelible memory is his first interview with Bette Davis (there have been five). "She cooked dinner for me herself and while I was with her the phone never rang. Here was one of the acknowledged legends of our time, after five marriages, all alone. Sitting in a room surrounded by her awards from around the world, sipping bourbon from a coffee cup, she blurted, 'When I recorded that song called 'The Single Life,' I never imagined Bette Davis, 30 years later, living by herself in her own no-man show.'"

After years of interviewing living celebrities, it's interesting that his first biography, **Patsy Cline: An Intimate Biography** (Dorchester Publishing), the controversial, well-documented story of the country and popular music star who died in a 1963 plane crash at the peak of her career, is about a celebrity he never knew.

The book, which has been under option for a possible TV movie, is about to go into its second printing.

Ellis' interest in Patsy began 14 years ago at MCA with stories told by her friend Loretta Lynn. Her autobiography and the subsequent film, "Coal Miner's Daughter," led to a revival of interest in Patsy and her recordings. First came a series of articles about the innovative singer from Winchester, Virginia, who paved the way for women in country music. "I began finding out things about Patsy that even her mother and husbands didn't know. It is not your typical

country-girl-makes good story. She had a tough life, which she made even tougher by defying the odds against her in a male-dominated business. Musically, she was 20 years ahead of her time, and, frankly, has never been equaled. She crossed to pop with her recordings of 'Crazy' and 'I Fall To Pieces,' and was given national TV exposure by Arthur Godfrey. She brought much happiness to others, but never found it in her own life."

Interviewing skills — with 95 people from Patsy's past — helped Ellis weave her story. When the book came out, Patsy's second husband, who does not approve of the book, told him (among other things), "I think you know more about her than I do!"

Ellis is planning a book on the Tony Awards and (their namesake) Antoinette Perry. And there's a musical, **Nearly Every Damn Spring**, which is set in a Mississippi hamlet in 1974, on the horizon. "I would like very much to have the show premiere in Mississippi and have been attempting to convince the University of Mississippi and Hinds, mainly because of its proximity to Jackson, that this could prove to be a great opportunity for us both."

Of course there has been some frustration along the way, but Ellis refutes that old cliché of how tough it is to be a writer. "I always managed to be my own person. If things got rough and I didn't like it, I left. And I somehow made a stable living. I've never really had to wonder where my next meal was coming from.

"A test I took at Ole Miss," he recalls, "revealed that I would be best suited as an undertaker or a fireman. But I wanted to be a writer! And I don't feel that I've sacrificed that much to do what I wanted to do or get where I am today. Since I feel I'm nowhere, there's still so much more to attain and I think when you look at your career and your life that way, you always have the excitement that keeps you young. And happy."

Elaine Hughes, a former Vicksburg/Clintonian and English instructor at Hinds Jr. College in Raymond, resides in New York City where she teaches at Nassau Community College in Garden City, Long Island and has a budding career as a cabaret singer.

Big Woods — What There Is Left

by Andy McWilliams

William Faulkner's **Big Woods** has a very special meaning for me. Having grown up in the late fifties and early sixties on a plantation near the Mississippi River, I was fortunate enough to catch the tail end of a dying era. That nostalgia for a lost time and a vanquished land can extract a heavy price.

Perhaps that explains why I would pay seventy-five dollars for a first edition of Faulkner's **Big Woods**. Reading about those days is the closest thing my son will ever have to living in them. He will never hunt wild hogs on my Grandfather's back eighty as I did on my first hunt with Cecil Glover, the blue-eyed Negro who claimed to be a strange mixture of Creole and Indian. I can remember walking in Cecil's tracks — protected by him and his ancient L.C. Smith "side by side" with the "rabbit ear" hammers — as Cecil tracked the hogs with his sense of smell. Like Faulkner's Sam Fathers, Cecil was a dying breed. My son, Orion, will never hunt with men like him on land our family had owned for generations. The back eighty was sold to an elite hunting club whose members initially invest twenty-five thousand dollars, topped by twenty-five hundred dollars' yearly dues. The wild hogs, remnants of a settlement my Great-grandfather owned — which was abandoned after the flood of 1937 and the Depression — can only be seen in offices of Memphis dentists, lawyers, and taxidermists.

When my Great-grandfather

owned this settlement by the Mississippi River, he and my Father would spend from early November until a few days before Christmas in their nomadic tent camps with several black men, mules, and a pack of Walker hounds, hunting a twenty square mile strip of virgin forest along the Mississippi River. They would take a month's supply of food, several cases of Old Crow whiskey, and explore land that had never seen a posted sign nor a hunting season. Sometimes my Uncle, Newton McWilliams, would take along his pet turkey gobbler, Bilbo, as a live decoy and caller on their turkey hunts. Live decoys are illegal now, due to the danger of the hunter being shot by another hunter. There were no other hunters then.

I never got to spend a cold winter day in a goose pit on a Mississippi River sandbar heated by a candle. By the time I was old enough to hunt, man's progress had put an end to those days by building a water-fowl refuge in Cairo, Illinois. This refuge halted the natural migration of the Canadian geese and forced my Uncle Newt to hunt ducks. My Father never hunted again.

When my Mother took me on my first deer hunt, my Father was content to run the dogs. It was a snowy winter day on Island 63 of the Mississippi River. My Mother and I were hunting in a grove of cedar trees — quite an oddity in the Delta woods — and we were forced

to build a fire. The snow-covered cedars gave the place a Christmas look as we warmed our half frozen fingers by the fire. We could hear the dogs getting closer and closer when my Mother poked me in the ribs with the butt of her model twelve Winchester.

There — not fifty years in front of us — were eight or ten deer, standing mesmerized by our fire. It was plain they had never seen a fire before and were probably wondering who those strange creatures were standing beside it. My ten-year-old legs began to shake and my heart began to pound like a big bass drum. I cried because my Mother would not let me shoot one of them. Little did I know that I was learning a lesson in respect and humility that would be a great asset later in my life.

There were hunting camps then a little more modern than Faulkner's Yokna hunting camp. According to Jerry Salley at Volume One book store in Clarksdale, his Aunt has a returned check written by Faulkner while at the Yokna Hunting Camp to cover his poker debts to Salley's Uncle. Faulkner spent a lot of time at this camp drinking whiskey, playing cards, and listening to hunting stories. I first stayed in one of those primitive tent camps in 1958. My young friends and I solved the mystery of the missing poker chips when we dug into a squirrel's den tree, finding not only the poker chips, but an angry, bushy-tailed thief as well. That camp has long

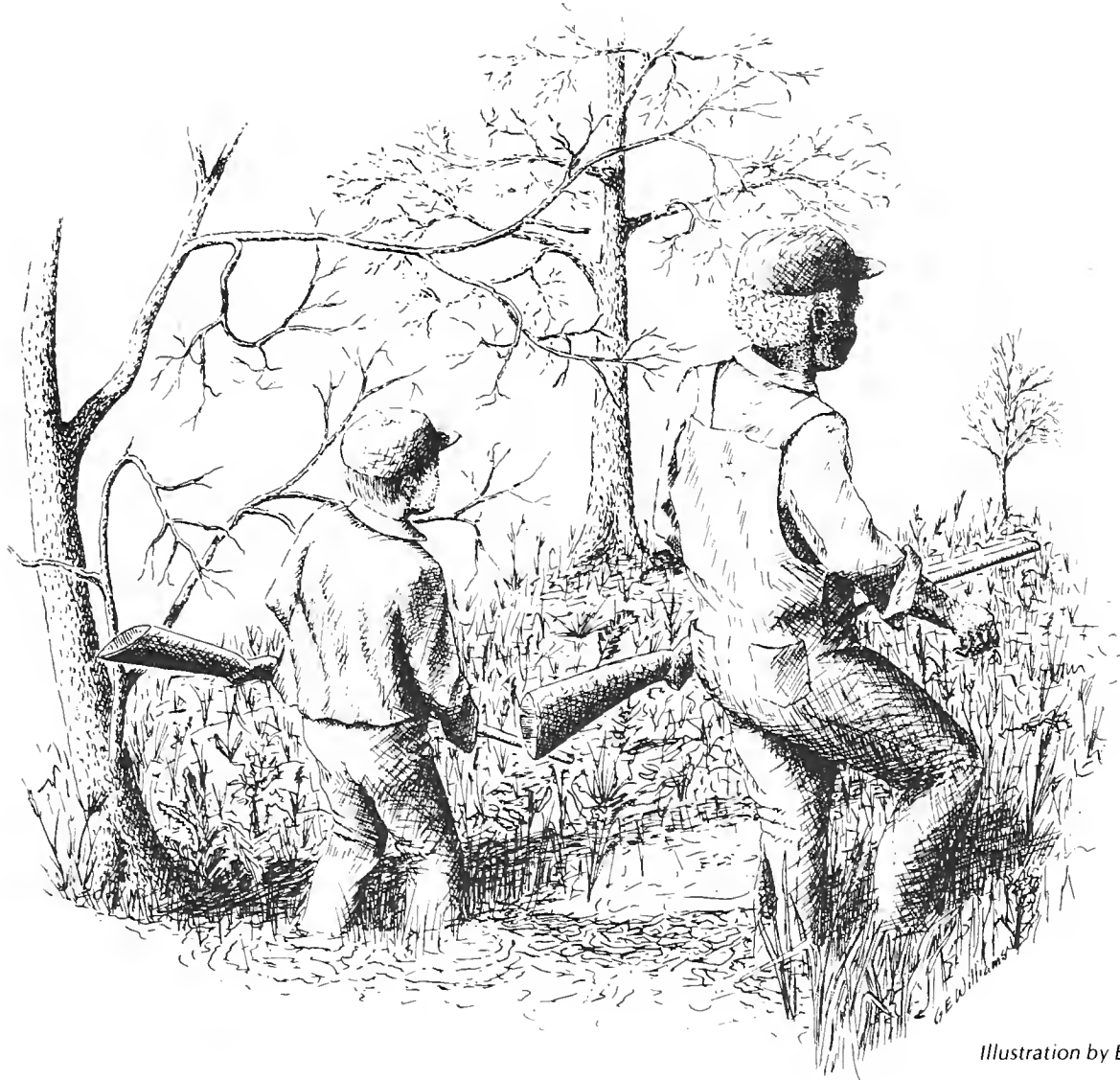


Illustration by Ed Williams

since been abandoned and re-claimed by a hunting club. There is a faded photograph of an old black man who cooked and cleaned deer still hanging on the wall of our wood frame cabin with the inscription "Uncle Henry Pratt - 1928." All that is left of Faulkner's camp is a rotten log house and a couple of trees in a soybean field.

Some of the traditions mentioned in Faulkner's **Big Woods** are still alive. Like Ike, many a young boy today goes through the ritual of having his face smeared with his first deer's blood. To me, it was a red badge of manhood. I always thought that the large woodpeckers that Faulkner called, "Lord to Gods" were called "Log Gods." It's plain to see that Mr. Faulkner spent a lot of time among the backwoodsmen.

Much of my childhood was spent with commercial fishermen and trappers — archetypes of Faulknerian characters — on what is now Miller's Point Hunting Club,

once a virgin forest that joined our farm. I can remember finding shelter and building a fire inside a giant sycamore tree on one of my earliest adventures. After the Fish and Game Commission lost its lease on this land, it was bought by a group of bankers, doctors, and large farm owners. A few years later Chicago Mills came in and cut out all the prime timber. They even clear-cut some of it and planted perfect rows of cottonwoods as a future investment. Only the virgin sycamores remained because they could not use hollow trees in the saw mills up North.

In the late sixties Miller's Point was home to the last of the long-tailed cats from which Coahoma County took its name. Coahoma in the Choctaw tongue means "red panther." I can remember hearing the panthers' blood curdling screams echoing much like the screech of a terrified woman. The last panther, to my

knowledge, was killed during the flood of 1973 by an ignorant levee board worker. The big cat was perched on a cottonwood limb — facing the danger of man — with its back to the perils of nature. It was literally hemmed in. The last long-tailed cat was left lying in the muddy Mississippi back waters. Like its brother, the bear, the red panther was become extinct, along with its natural habitat. When I see Delta families sell off land passed down from generation to generation, watch these people trade their heritage for a townhouse in the suburbs, I am reminded of William Faulkner's prophesy in **Big Woods**: "No wonder the ruined woods I used to know don't cry for retribution. . . The people who have destroyed it will accomplish its revenge."

Andy McWilliams attends Delta State University, majoring in journalism.

The Vineyard

by William Hodges

Here we have, at a glance, a community on the precipice of extinction, spent and disappearing. Yet this is not it; for every aspect of human and natural experience, the most complicated and most simple, is expressed and spent here each day. The entire distance and spectrum of each living possibility curls and weaves among these trees and houses, finely entwining them like so many bundles of gifts, the receiver silent and the giver as mysterious as the stars in the clear night. It is this mixture of desolation and richness, solid form and reaching space that roots we who live here firmly and inextricably. Not that life in Middleton is always noble or anything of the like. It is not. It is as complex, circumvent and conspiratory as a native spider's web and the durability and strength of the designs bonding it just as fragile.

Now money for me has always been as important as for the next man: food and clothes for the body and fuel for a great many fantasies. As in my childhood I still dream of living in the Orient, buying a small country and retiring in my later years as an eccentric but benevolent dictator, my head just above drowning in luxury. Instead I found myself working at three dollars an hour — due to lack of imagination, I suppose — for James Carson, the man who once harvested this land where my house is situated. I still work in the fields during the time when the crops grow and do nothing to speak of for

the remainder but dream of China and put a nail here and there to prevent my porch from plummeting into the gulley. You might say I have realized my dreams, I am an absolute monarch for no one questions my demands.

"Harris! How are you?" asks Mr. Gillespie, the druggist.

"Just fine." But who knows? Life in Middleton is as unpredictable as life in the Orient and nobody knows what that is like.

The vineyard is the hinge and meaning of this narrow spread of land. I have always felt deeply the essence of places, the essential intangible spirit of place which pours out in such ways as the smell of ground fog and the crystalline refraction of dawn light, the bite of turned earth in the nostrils and the strange, still, warm chill of a summer morning very early. These things which can go unrecognized just as one forgets to notice his own breathing, are the real place. The fence posts, signs and roadbeds are dim and distant, swallowed by a curl of mist. The vineyard has a feeling more powerful than all this, as if the rock, earth and grapes are a curtain only shadowing some thunderous reality. The vineyard rolls over the crescent of the hill, deep and green, spiralling and luminous against the grey of a sky as dark as night. From across the gulley it is stone quiet and there is no breeze.

Working in this place has, at moments, approached reverence and even worship in that my

thoughts have been lost to its beauty, but working in the vineyard with James Carson was as working in paradise with a fallen angel. The days were dark with foreboding among the vines and time had no tangible end or beginning. Carson would curse and work and sweat beyond the capacity of normal men and though I toiled beside him, I held him at a distance, a dark and silent spirit consigned to a destiny that stimulated no curiosity on my part.

It was the time of harvest when the first stranger came. The man approached me, asked for Carson and I pointed him out. He spoke briefly with James, who knocked him to the ground, splitting his cheek terribly. The man rose, and was struck again. The man then wove his way back to his car, bleeding and defeated. Carson and I locked eyes for a moment but exchanged no words. It was as simple as that and no more than five minutes had elapsed. We went back to work.

In the vineyard, on the days when the sweat and grit stung in my forehead and neck, leaving me miserable and entrapped by the heat, I noticed that James Carson was no more or no less tormented in that pulsing white light than on a cool fall day. I always and continuously recognized in his eyes the hopelessness of misery and imprisonment. He was the cruelest man I have ever known yet he was always civil to me, I suppose because I had spoken to him

scarcely more than twice in the years we had known each other. He seemed to appreciate that and I believe ours may have been the only secure relationship he ever knew.

We worked through the harvest in a frightening heat and after my pay and after the taxes, Carson stored up a wealth unequalled by others who worked similar land. Were I as blessed by profit as was Carson, I would abandon my plight and cross the Pacific. James, instead, became more silent and, I suspect, more miserable.

It was then that the second of the messengers came. He was jailed, beaten and sent on his way. James Carson had a power beyond his stature. He had accused the man of fraudulent solicitation.

I did understand for the first time that Carson did not own the vineyard. He worked it, reaped the benefits and laughed in the face of his benefactor. I can only suspect the sadness and hope with which the owner of the vineyard sent the third inquirer to collect that which was rightly his. The man expected rejection and wasted only a few words with Carson. When he sought legal evidence in the form of witnesses of the beatings and extortion we all turned away. We all shared the guilt and tired decrepitude of silence. We watched and did nothing. We worked the earth and played at being ignorant. I was torn, mind and spirit, and I was filled with joy when the owner himself did come.

Now just north of the vineyard on

what is now Highway 35 there is a bend in the road which takes you from the east-northeast and aims you south. In the bend is a deserted building which housed a store and behind that the foundation of a house that burned before I was born. It seems to have been larger than any house in Middleton before or since and the family, my grandmother had told in a matter-of-fact way, owned the world south of Middleton. Their name was Harper, she had said, and the only reason they didn't own the world north of Middleton was that it

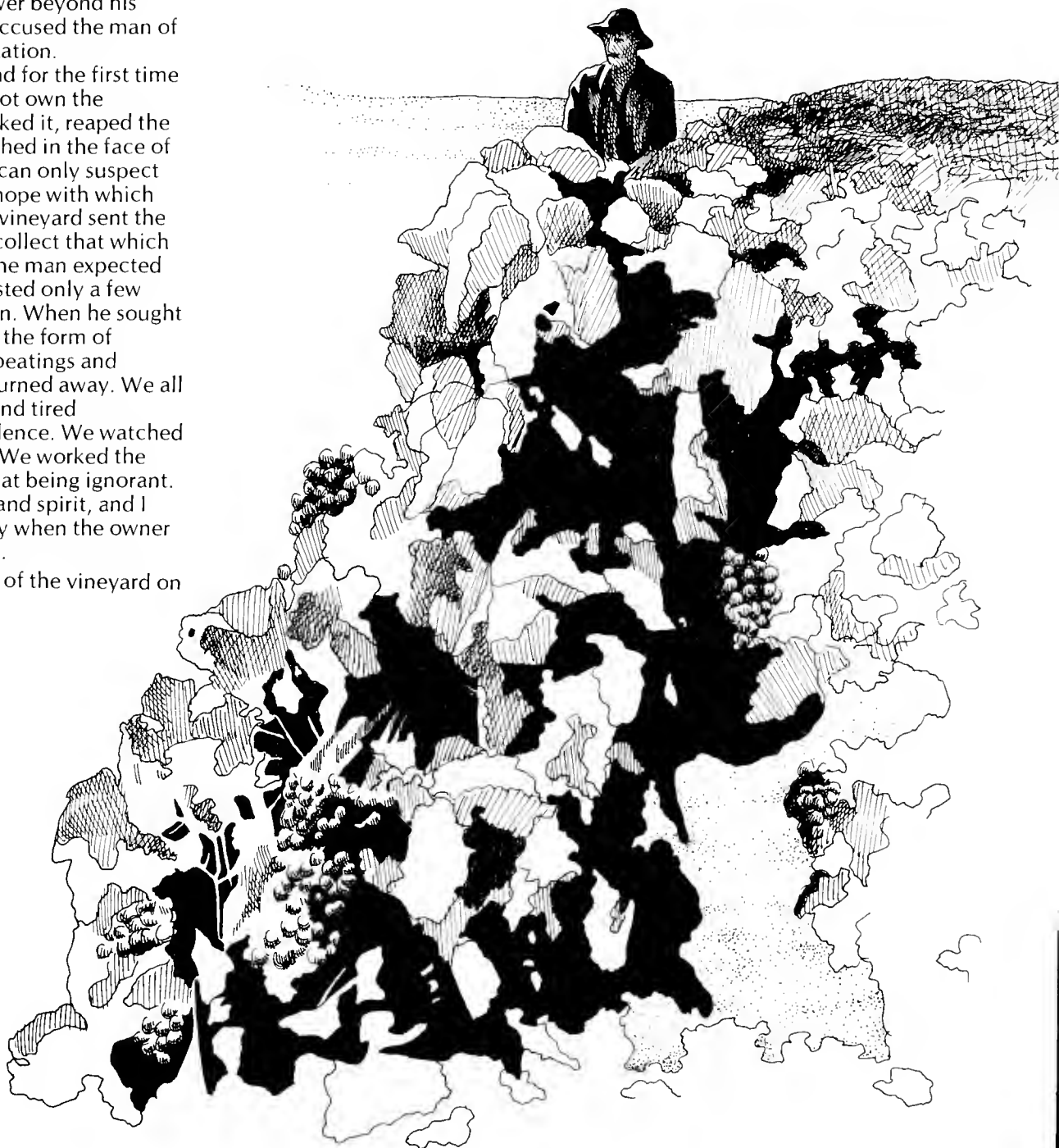
froze stone cold in the winter and they had no use for it. Oddly enough, I have never thought to question that until just now. At any rate, that curve in Highway 35 is known as Harper's Bend.

Harper's Bend, Inc. was also the name printed on the business card presented to me by a young man of the same name some two months after the third agent had been sent on his way.

Mr. Harper had nothing particularly notable in his appearance but seemed calm and

Continued on page 26

Illustration by Becky Pate



A Bird In The Hand

by Merita Koll

Kelly Carpenter is a shy, gentle man of few words, but he can take a piece of wood and a small Case knife and carve his way through any language barrier. His talent as a wood carver has always been a source of joy for him and his family, but his hand carved birds gained wider acclaim this past year when Kelly was invited to display them in the White House in Washington.

Kelly has carved song birds of every species native to his hometown of Greenwood, Mississippi. He carves each one in life size replicas and somehow captures the spirit and motion of each as he works.

He starts out with a pattern drawn on all four sides of a block of wood and uses a bandsaw to get a rough form of the bird. Then he uses a Case knife and his virtuosity to turn it into a work of art that could even fool Mother Nature. When he finished his robin he put it on the front lawn to see how the real robins would react. Within minutes the yard was full of robins investigating the brilliant newcomer. "They would dive at it, hop around it chirping and scolding, trying in every way to get that bird to move," he laughed.

As a color guide for painting, Kelly studies live birds and uses **A Field Guide to the Study of Birds** by Rodger Tory Peterson. He carefully mixes and shades his paints to produce the true color of each species.

Kelly studies birds in their natural habitats, and during walks around their nesting and feeding areas he cuts branches and uses them for perches for his carved birds. Nature

becomes part of his art as he leaves as much of the natural growth on each branch as is needed for a natural effect. In one instance a cocoon was attached and there was added pleasure as Kelly watched it through its normal process of development with no harm done to the occupant.

The birds are carved from the tupelo gum tree. Kelly goes to saw mills around the Delta which are set up temporarily by lumber companies and gets pieces of wood that would otherwise be thrown away. "The lumber companies sell it to furniture makers to make table legs," Kelly says. The saw mills move into areas where the tupelo gum grows, usually low lying areas where water stands over the trunk. The tree looks much like the cyprus tree. "The bottom three feet of the tree is prime wood for the wood carver," Kelly says.

"White pine, walnut, cedar, and mahogany are what I use for some of my other works," says Kelly, "I get some of that from scraps that carpenters leave behind, and some I have to buy."

Kelly's work is not limited to carving birds. He has gotten four grandchildren off to rollicking starts in life astride rocking horses carved from pine and cyprus, with oak rockers, a rope tail, and leather ears. The equine facial features are like the laughing horse on the Hee Haw T.V. show. Just looking at his toothy grin would put any young heart in a

galloping mood.

Kelly made some unique clothes racks for "The May Pole," a children's clothing store in Oxford, owned by his daughter Debby. Using his skills as an artist he sketched life-sized portraits of children onto plywood, cut them out with his saw, and hand carved the finishing features. He and Debby worked together painting them and setting them up. The racks help make her shop an interesting and popular attraction in Oxford.

Kelly finds uses for even the smallest scraps by carving miniatures. He carved each of his four daughters a pair of miniature, brogan shoes (thimble size) for Christmas. The shoes are walnut, and have so much character as they have been carved to depict many miles of wear. With their tiny turned up toes and gaping soles with worn holes in the bottoms. They are detailed with high tops and tiny, pin point eyelets for the shoe string.

No detail is too small for Kelly's careful consideration. He carved a miniature red-headed woodpecker, about the size of a Carroll county cricket, that appears to be pecking away at a hole from his tiny perch. The detail is so realistic that nothing seems left to the imagination except the breath of life.

Most of his detail work is finished up from Kelly's big easy chair in the den. This must be where his daughter, Gail, gets the description

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Photos by Cindy Herring

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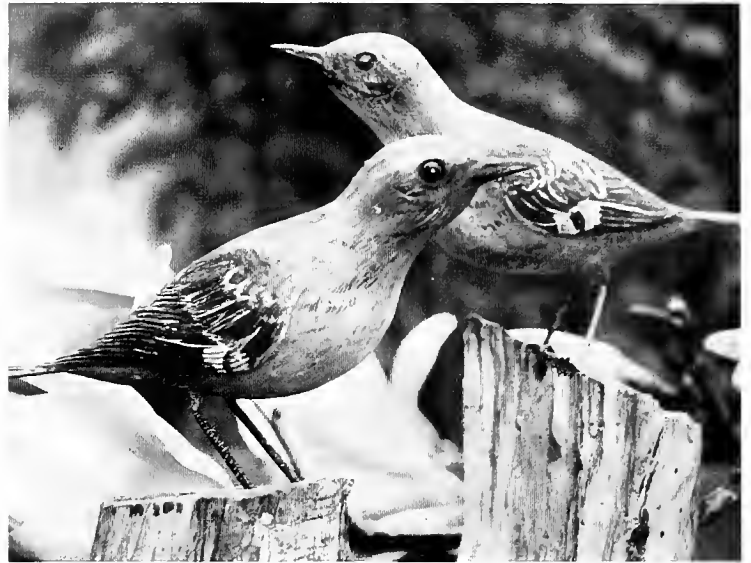
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(Left, right and lower right) His hand-carved birds gained wider acclaim this past year when Kelly was invited to display them in the White House in Washington, D.C.



Photos by Cindy Herring

(Left) Kelly at work on a rocking horse made of pine and cypress, with oak rockers. The equine facial features are like the laughing horse on the Hee Haw T.V. show.



Kelly's work is not limited to carving birds. His rocking horses would put any young heart in a galloping mood. In this case, his grandson, Hiram Eastland.



Kelly finds uses for even the smallest scraps by carving miniatures.

of her father as being "easy going and laid back."

Kelly has been carving since he was ten. In a small wooden box he keeps treasures that reveal some of his talent as a young wood carver back in Carroll county where he was born and raised. In the box is a neat-looking sling shot with decorative etchings and the initials K.C. carved in; a boy-sized pair of carved pliers that really work; a hand carved puppet called "Limber Jack" with moveable joints that enabled him to kick and dance to the "Fiddling tunes" of that day.

Also in the box is a walnut replica of a 1939 Ford with only one dime-size wheel left on it. "Leaping Lena" he grinned, "My first car was a 1939 Ford. That's what I had when I married."

Back in his work room are his tools; only the bare necessities; a band saw, a couple of small wood chisels, a small hatchet, and two butcher knives with duct tape on the ends, which he uses as drawing knives. There are three whittler sets that his daughters gave him. His Case knife is kept in his pocket.

Kelly is sixty years old and is

retired from Civil Service. He is a heart patient and has had to slow down in recent years. His wood carving helps generate a little extra cash.

Last spring Kelly's birds attracted the attention of Theresa Elmore, personnel coordinator at the White House. She saw some of his birds in the home of his daughter, Gail Eastland, who was living in Washington at the time. She asked him to give a private showing in the White House.

The wren, mocking bird, bluebird, chick-a-dee, and robin flew north for an extended stay of two months. They were displayed just outside the Oval Office. The President admired them all, but expressed a genuine interest in the robin. Kelly offered the robin to him as a gift, and the President responded with a letter of appreciation. It reads in part:

Dear Mr. Carpenter:

I am delighted to have the hand carved robin. . . You certainly have a wonderful skill in capturing in such detail the beauty of this North American songbird. Many thanks for sharing your talent with me. I shall treasure your gift as a special remembrance of your friendship. I know that your interesting craft provides you with a deep sense of satisfaction and accomplishment. Keep up the good work. Nancy joins me in sending you our warmest wishes and we want you to know you are in our thoughts and prayers.

Sincerely,
Ronald Reagan

The robin was also a favorite of Mrs. Carpenter. She says, "The robin was my favorite bird. I called the robin mine. But that one was the President's favorite too, and who can contest the President?"

Meanwhile back in Kelly's natural habitat, his easy chair in the den, an American buffalo is emerging from a block of white pine and from a four foot strip of mahogany Kelly expects to carve an eight foot chain. And inside that block of tupelo gum another robin waits.

Merita Koll is a Freshman at Delta State University, majoring in English and minoring in journalism. She studied feature writing under Dorothy Shawhan.

Blame It On The Blues

by Glenn York

His eyes blinked open, then shut, as he motionlessly regained consciousness. There was a distinct haze in the room. . . the kind of thick smoke you'd find in a room full of guests at a New Year's Eve Party. But, this was number two eleven, Delta Medical Center, and Ezakiah Duncan sincerely believed he was being delivered into Heaven . . . dead.

He had been injected with tranquilizers by two paramedics, and was so heavily sedated that he had sunk unconsciously into their arms. The last thing the eighty-eight year old black man remembered was standing by a Coca-Cola machine outside the Greyhound Bus Terminal in Eudora, Arkansas. He was crouched contentedly on his haunches as he ate his breakfast . . . a can of vienna sausages and a sweet roll. Ezakiah Duncan had always possessed the dignity and candor of a knight. This meal was as delicious to him as caviar would have been to a queen.

He had been slowly rocking on the front porch. Rocking in the afternoon was a pastime, a solace from the torrid sun. As sweat beads dripped from his thick brow, he suddenly stopped. The memory of a news story on the 6:00 p.m.

newscast came into his thoughts. It had been a report concerning a much respected man, Benjamin Kirk. Kirk had died tragically in Greenville, Mississippi, and the City was erecting a statue in his honor.

Ezakiah had no knowledge of this man's fame, nor did he care to. The name, Benjamin Kirk, had a soothing sound to it, a magnetic effect that drew Ezakiah into his sojourn. For, as if in a trance, he stood up and walked down the porch steps, leaving the crooked, torn screen door wide open.

Moments later, he stood in the doorway of the Vidalia Bus Terminal, a huge smile cut deeply into his loose jaws. His eyes scanned the shiny floor, the travel posters. His fascination was forthright. A boy playing Donkey Kong noticed Ezakiah and began to snicker, for the look of astonishment on the old man's shriveled face could only indicate total ignorance of video games.

"Could I help you this morning?" the impatient bass voice of the ticket clerk boomed from across the counter. Ezakiah slowly turned his head like a robot until his eyes met the clerk's.

"Needa ticket," he said with an enormous smile.

That's exactly what Mr. Duncan said, and not much more. It took the clerk's most determined efforts to decipher that his customer wanted a bus to Greenville. Thinking that the elderly gentleman lacked competency, the clerk charged him ten dollars more than the normal fare. And, Mr. Duncan innocently enough, passed HIM a counterfeit bill which had been stored beneath his kitchen floor for fifteen years.

The idea of riding a bus put Ezakiah in a state of euphoria. He rested his head upon the pillowed backing of the seat. Neither the sickening bittersweet smell of cheap perfume, nor the bouncing of the bus along the washed out Louisiana highway annoyed him. He was knee deep in celestial pride . . . a passenger aboard the "BIG DOG"; the motor car anthem of the poor.

It's a known fact that everyone smiles and waves when the Greyhound passes, especially people who live in the ghetto. The Greyhound symbolizes, to the poor, a chance to see Chicago, St. Louis, Detroit, or anywhere in the United States, because traveling by bus is much less expensive than operating an automobile, assuming you are



Illustration by Becky Pate

fortunate enough to own one. Even an old fool like Ezakiah knew this, for he still retained memories of riding with Greyhound when HE was a child.

Somewhere between Eudora and Greenville, the declining black man went silently cuckoo. . . slap crazy and quietly out of his mind. He had dreamed he was a brain surgeon about to perform surgery upon himself. Ironically, Ezakiah was unaware such an operation existed, making the entire dream more frightening. Even MORE ironic, the operation had been a total success, achieving a full, effective lobotomy without the first indication of an incision.

When admitted to the emergency room, the sausage can remained tightly clinched in his right hand. Ezakiah was not going to be denied this meal. Two college interns, Chris Bradner and Charles Fadden, were assigned to monitor the patient. Since no one could remove the can, it remained firmly in its place.

Ezakiah was placed in the hospital's mental ward for observation. . . a white walled room having no windows, no pictures, and a white ceiling, as well. He was administered a shot to assuage his

fright. He lay unconsciously through the night and into the next morning.

When Ezakiah tried to focus through the haze left by the drug, he assumed that he was being greeted by two Angels from the glorious Kingdom of Heaven. Wearing white nylon pantsuits, the interns appeared Angelic. Only seconds after Mr. Duncan cast his sight upon "Angels," from the hall speaker came the monotone voice of a doctor calling for assistance. There was no further argument. Ezakiah Duncan had clearly heard the voice of God.

Chris and Charles tried desperately to convince their patient that they were ONLY humans, still on the not so glorious Kingdom of Earth. But Ezakiah held as firmly to his beliefs as to that sausage can. He even went into a rage when denied his opportunity to talk with St. Peter. The interns determined to prove to Ezakiah that he was indeed alive and not even really insane.

It was coincidental that the Delta Blues Festival had been scheduled on the same Saturday afternoon that Chris and Charles took Ezakiah out of the hospital. It was also

coincidental that Son Thomas had been scheduled as the featured entertainment. Not only was he a favorite of the two interns, but Thomas was perhaps the most popular blues musician in the entire South.

Their plan was to take Ezakiah to the festival, hoping the myth would hold true that all blacks possess a strong mental attraction to the Blues. Chris was especially convinced this would deliver the old man from his fantasy of Heaven. In spite of Charles' disuasion, Mr. Duncan was driven to Hardy Park where the annual musical event was to take place. Unknown to either intern, this particular afternoon and location was also the setting for a Shrine dedication; an event that would draw four thousand spectators.

The thick August air was a blend of crowd noises, passing cars, and blues guitars. A crowd gathered at one end of the park to swing their hips and clap their hands to the emotional hypnotic rhythm of blues music. At the opposite end, the formally dressed people sat in hard back chairs facing the canvas covered statue that would be dedicated at two o'clock.

All of a sudden, there was a disturbance among the Blues audience. Two blue jean clad men were weaving through the crowd in a frantic attempt to locate someone. Blame it on the blues, for Chris and Charles had become so emotionally involved in the festival that neither had noticed Mr. Duncan's drifting away in sleep walking manner. Poor Ezakiah had no way of knowing what was happening to himself. His metabolism had been so altered by extreme doses of stimulants and depressants that he was on an unpredictable mental roller coaster ride.

He had been standing in front of the wooden stage where Son Thomas was performing. The music had suddenly become a portent. . . the compelling urge that followed lured him away. So, he wandered into the streets and strolled down the shady avenue. He watched the trees, the birds, the radiant sun, until hunger gnawed within his stomach, prompting him to walk in search of food.

Continued on page 30

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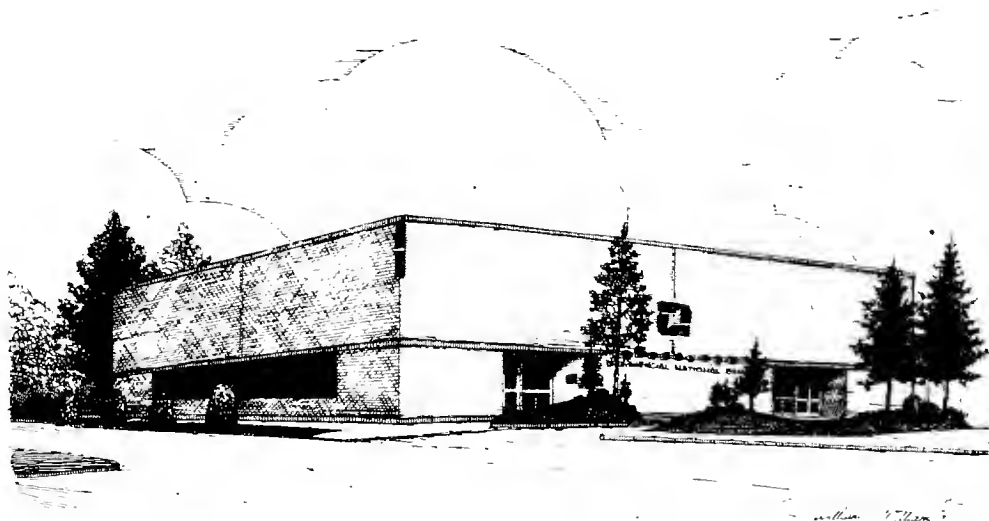
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Linden:

A Taste Of The Old (And Not So Old) Deep South

by Yvonne Tomek

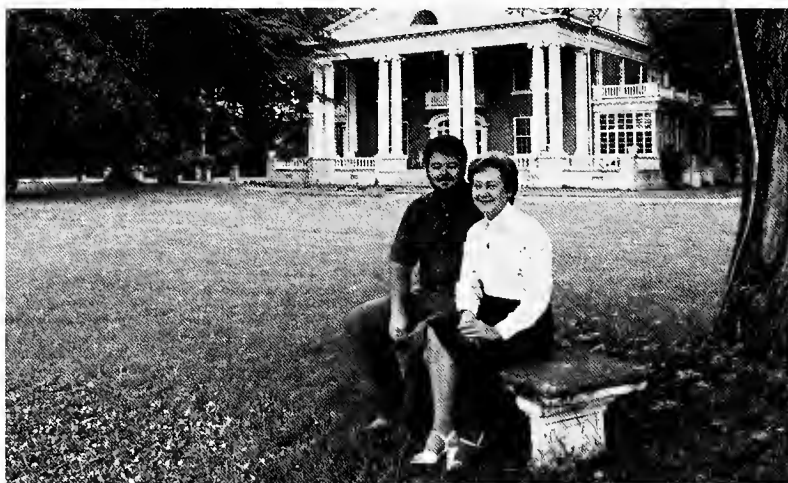
The Alimentary Canal contains the only stream that flows through all history and geography, laving banks on which cluster those works that mark man at his most civilized.

— Clifton Fadiman

To call Linden a "restaurant" is really to give it a misnomer. It is much more than that. Foremost, huge, tall, and majestic, facing a western sky on the banks of Lake Washington in Glen Allan, it is said to be the best example of Colonial Revival in Mississippi. Intact with all of the original furnishings that graced it back in 1914 when it was first constructed, it is on the National Register of Historic Places.

Set on a ten-acre lawn surrounded everywhere by magnificent magnolias that were already there when it was built, it is a three-storied, dark-bricked home with big, white columns framing the front entrance. With a porte-cochere that used to shelter horse and carriages and stone pillars that once supported arched trellises of wisteria under which people strolled from the fields to the side entrance, one cannot help but think of those antebellum estates of Natchez, Vicksburg, and Atlanta as they must have been back in the days when the cotton was high and the living was easy.

The Linden story goes back to 1906 when Mr. and Mrs. P.L. Mann had the foundations laid for it to be the main quarters of their immense cotton plantation. The finishing touches were put on it eight years



Margie Dorris, hostess-pianist and Jack Burkhalter, Jr., chef, caught in a rare moment of relaxation on the ten acre Linden grounds. The foundation for Linden, considered the finest example of Colonial Revival architecture in Mississippi, was laid in 1906 and the home was completed in 1914.



The flavor of fine food must be enhanced in this atmosphere of fine antique surroundings and beautiful architectural details (even to the original silk panels). Margie Dorris often entertains guests with medley's of "old favorites" at this piano.



Photos by Virginia Rayner

Part of the murals of Lake Washington, painted by an artist from New York, adorn this portion of the back hall. A portrait of Mrs. P.L. Mann, one of the planners of this classic home, hangs over the antique case.

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later and the Manns lived there for their remaining years. It has been owned by the family's descendants since then, the last generation of which now occupies the private upper floors when it returns occasionally to visit.

The first floor, however, has indeed recently taken a new tone. It has been leased by Margie and Lamar Dorris of Greenville as a large dining area that entertains an evening clientele. I spoke to Margie Dorris, a lovely and engaging woman, who was kind enough to grant me an interview and to give me the "grand tour." Through a little anecdote, she explained to me how Linden first opened to the public last year. It seems that she and her husband are good friends with a family who have a son, Jackie Burkhalter, Jr. who has always had a genius for cooking. When Jackie graduated from high school, the Dorrises gave him a beautiful cookbook in which Margie had made a little inscription that read: "I can just see you one day in a big restaurant overlooking Lake Washington that will really put Glen Allan on the map." As Jackie

went on to Mississippi State University, he majored in Hotel Management, a program that includes courses in cuisine. Upon graduation, he called up Margie with a brainstorm. They might be able to lease the first floor of Linden. Would she be interested in acting as hostess if he served as the head cook? Yes, indeed, she would be. So, Linden first opened its doors to the public in September, 1983 and the prophesy came to pass.

Guests now may dine there Tuesday through Saturday at 5 p.m. until 11 p.m. Luncheons during the week and private parties of ten people or more are catered by reservation. Guests are also offered a guided tour of the surrounding rooms. Margie continued to show me around. The vast, first-floor foyer contains murals on every wall that were painted by an artist from New York. He apparently lived in the house during the six months in 1908 that it took for him to complete this pastoral artwork. In the bedroom downstairs, one can view a canopy bed with crocheted bedspread, a spinning wheel, gas light fixtures, a marble washbasin,

wicker rockers, tiffany lamps, a sewing table, and a petticoat mirror that were all there seventy years ago. Antique rugs abound. There is an old crank telephone in the hall and the bathroom has an antique shower that is the most curious feature of all. There are stained glass windows and an old-fashioned bath tub resting on four legs.

The library, which serves as one of the dining rooms, has an old, rare book collection containing such volumes as **Conference of Governors, 1908; The House Journal of Mississippi, 1922;** and a leather-bound series of Shakespeare's and Charles Dickens' complete works. The living room has also been converted to a dining room. Its high walls have their original, peach silk coverings. There resides an old baby grand piano in front of the fireplace where Margie will entertain the guests with rousing medleys of everyone's all-time favorite songs while guests dine at buffet and banquet-sized tables that have enhanced Linden since the beginning.

The view from the glassed-in sun porch, which is yet one more dining

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room, is spectacular. It allows in streams of light from a setting sun over the lake. Also, on the sun porch is a display of old magazines such as **House Beautiful** and **Better Homes and Gardens** dating back to 1911.

As William Makepeace Thackeray once said, "Next to eating good dinners, a healthy man with a benevolent mind must like, I think, to read about them." Hence, the menu: It offers what it calls "Enhancements" of seafood gumbo, shrimp cocktails, quiche, and oysters in the rough. Its "Entrees" consist of various platters such as rib-eye steaks, filet-mignon, catfish fillets, and grilled shrimp. Jackie recommended the giant, grilled shrimp to me and I did not live to regret the suggestion. They were marvelous. Prepared over an open flame, seasoned just so, and served on a skewer, they were an impressive culinary delight, and, I might add, almost more than I could eat. The French-fried potatoes are almost worth a trip to Linden in themselves. Cut in very large chunks, salted just the right amount, I suspect that they have been sauteed. No mere complement to a meal are they. They could serve as a course unto themselves. The green salad has a tangy, creamy house dressing. The iced-tea is sweet and lemony. The "Enticements" include cakes, pies, and frozen desserts, and are made fresh daily from the finest ingredients.

Linden is really a multi-media experience. Amidst the historical architecture, furniture, and art, the Southern cuisine and music serve as modern-day anachronisms that add dimension to this elegant Colonial setting. Of all the art forms known to man, the preparation of food is the most indispensable; therefore, if the archives do not lure you, the menu will. Located one mile north of Glen Allan, Linden is just a 25 minute drive south of Greenville. You may call for reservations at (601) 839-2181 or 839-5321 and bring the whole family. It even has antique high chairs the resilience of which my family can attest to!

Yvonne Tomek holds an M.A. degree in English and is presently a part-time instructor at Delta State University.

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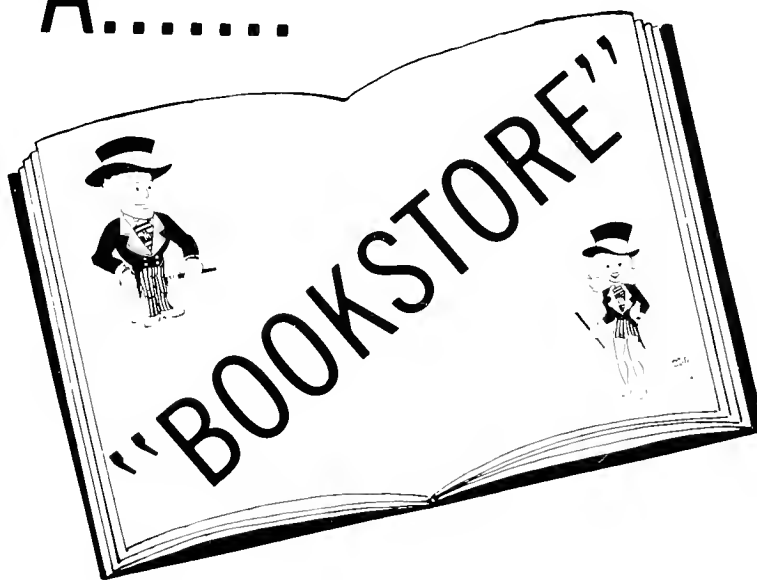
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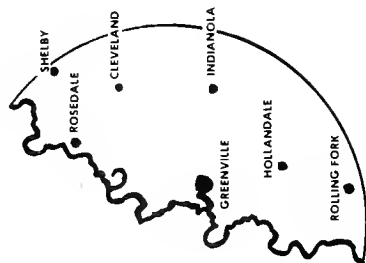
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Continued from page 15

unhurried in a sense that was very physical and deliberate and it was this quality which set his face so firmly in my memory. We had to walk a half mile or so before we found Carson just as he was leaving a fallow field. Mr. Harper smiled, genuinely, I thought, and extended his hand to his tenant. It seemed to me that Carson was very civil to the owner of the vineyard and even appeared glad to see him. I considered the strangeness of this after I left them in conversation but dismissed it to the general inscrutability of James Carson.

Later in the same day I saw Carson in town but he made no mention of Mr. Harper. I long ago had learned not to initiate conversation with Carson so I kept my silence and assumed that by some miracle the business between them had come to an honorable solution.

I had not given Mr. Harper or his visit much thought until a deep soaking storm in late August made it impossible to work the earth. Even then this was the most distant thing from my thoughts. The sky was tangled up in wind and rain that seemed to cut the air in one great solid curtain and the water poured off the roof of my porch in a punctured translucent sheet. Through this glassy lens I stared up toward the slope of the vineyard, possessed by a preoccupation I could not name but that it was silent, still and filled with an anticipation that tasted and smelled of dread.

For nearly one precise hour the rain came down upon the slope like a piece of divine machinery, flattening the grass and uprooting

buried stick and stone in a meticulous cadence. When it was over it was completely over and the sky lifted and opened and a clean light bore down, pure and devoid of heat.

There on the ridge just below the vines was a patch of naked earth completely and perfectly eroded by the rain. In the new light it appeared as an unnatural slash in the red clay and later, standing above it, it measured three feet by a little more than six: a fresh grave exposed by the elements and empty. In the hard clay at the bottom (it was shallow, four feet at most) there was the indenture left by a face and body. With a sickness I recognized the features and as I reached down to touch the impression I saw a vision so clear that it blocked my senses and I felt the strain of lifting and rolling the dead weight into this dismal resting place. The face of Mr. Harper stood still and waxen in my mind and it took my entire imagination to convince myself (without conviction) that the perception was not real, without substance, a phantom of an exhausted mind. I made a promise there which proved impossible to keep: to forget that which I had seen. I slipped back into the rainfilled afternoon from that dark night which even now is present with me and just before I returned I saw James Carson hurry into the darkness which clings to the tangled edges of our vineyard.

It was a day late in the fall when almost everything concerning the harvest had been completed: the hay in bales, the soybean fields plowed under and the vineyard clipped back against the winter, when James Carson died. It was the

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first time I had witnessed a death and the horror of his particular death grips me still, the image too clear for dismissal, surfacing at even my most preoccupied moments.

It was an hour from sundown and the shadows pulled back along the field toward the road, Carson on the extreme west, facing away with his surveyor's transit. He had always taken care to measure and remeasure the land, never trusting new fences nor the boundaries within which his neighbors planted.

I started in his direction and to this day it has not come to me why I did so, though the reason must have been there. Just ahead of me, halfway between Carson and I, walked another man. The wind blew eastward, hiding the sound of our approach from Carson and my footsteps from the stranger.

The man was not ten feet from James when I heard him speak and Carson turned to face us both, though I know he never saw me, so intense was his stare of disbelief at the man who stood before him. He had the astonished look of a man whose world no longer existed, completely overcome by the fact that reality for him had been a simple misunderstanding. I do not believe he ever drew another breath. He stood rigid still for a very long time, his eyes gorged with pressure and his skin turning darker. He trembled very slightly and then his body began to collapse one part at a time, first an arm crumpling to his side, then a leg giving way to put him down on one knee. All in one moment he struck the ground, disjointed, eyes open but incredibly empty, gone. When they put him on the stretcher they could not pry his arms and legs down straight or turn his head up. That is the last I saw of him: a giant, dark crab.

When the other man turned to face me I saw it was Mr. Harper, but not the younger Mr. Harper as I had at first been convinced. It was his father and when he removed his hat, the thinness of his white hair broke the resemblance, though with the hat on, at a glance and in the right light, the father and the son were inseparable in appearance.

William Hodges has a background in English and Fine Arts. He presently makes his home in Carrollton, MS.



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Book Review

One Writer's Beginnings

by Rebecca Hood-Adams

Whole cloth.

Not patchwork scraps pieced together, nor yard goods of standard lengths, but whole cloth that falls from the bolt in one continuous shimmering thread. Eudora Welty's **One Writer's Beginnings** unwinds to reveal the fabric of genius. It's dazzling.

I hope you won't by-pass these memory pictures of Welty's girlhood in Jackson, Mississippi, thinking **One Writer's Beginnings** is only of interest to the Welty scholar or novice author seeking inspiration. This collection, based upon three lectures delivered last year at Harvard University, speaks with a universal voice. The quiet revelations of Miss Welty's life and how it shaped her work stand as an example of that much sought, seldom reached level of perfection. She is a master of the English language. Simple sentences interweave the telling details which strike a heart-chord and ring with a power surprising in impact. There's no "big" story here. Miss Welty never hunted lions like Hemingway; she didn't take the train home from Hollywood like Faulkner; she didn't splash in a Paris fountain like Fitzgerald. She stayed home and wrote. And that stalwart dedication

to her own gifts bespeaks a heroism beyond showboating novelists. As Miss Welty says, "A sheltered life can be a daring life as well. For all serious daring starts from within."

In a smaller Jackson, in a simpler time you'll meet young Eudora's parents, follow their love story, move into their home where the striking clock taught time to the writer who plumbs memory to create her life's work. Her frame of vision focuses on the interconnection of emotions which join and separate the individual with the magical warp of mankind. You cannot read **One Writer's Beginnings** without being deeply moved. Miss Welty illuminates the tiniest moments in such a way as to shed light upon larger questions. There is no doubt she is the greatest living American author; an excellent case can be made for her stature in twentieth century literature. Welty writes the story we all live. A national treasure, she is to be cherished as mother to our memory.

There is something fine and clean about **One Writer's Beginnings**. The work is permeated with a contagious, uplifting spirit. It is reaffirming to see genius keep company with the modest, gentle

voices inhabiting Welty's work. It fills you up and leaves you hopeful for humanity.

One Writer's Beginnings (Harvard University Press, \$10) is difficult to review. Could you critique a sunrise, evaluate the perfection of a blade of grass? Any praise, however well-intended, falls short of the glory of these natural wonders. So it is with Miss Welty's work.

If you don't read but one book this year, read **One Writer's Beginnings**. It will leave you brimming.

FOOTNOTE: About the time you read this column, I'll be at the Writers on the River Conference held at Southwestern at Memphis. "Terms of Endearment" author Larry McMurtry will be the keynote speaker and classes will be – conducted by such notables as Pulitzer Prize winning poet Howard Nemerov and Delta novelist Barry Hannah. Talent of this caliber is evidence of the South's traditional love of good literature. Expect a full report next column.

Rebecca Hood-Adams received her Master's degree in English from Delta State University and her B.A. in journalism from Memphis State University. Ms. Hood-Adams has had several articles published including her collection of verse, Biscuit Soppin' Blues.



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